

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 06052 030627Z

10

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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USIA-06 OMB-01 SSM-03 SAM-01 MCT-01 /088 W

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R 021504Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2895

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, IS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: MFA OFFICIAL DISCUSSES SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON

REF: TEL AVIV 5319, DAMADCUS 5742, DAMASCUS 5621

1. AN EMBASSY OFFICER ON SEPTEMBER 1 DISCUSSED THE SUBSTANCE OF DAMASCUS 5621 AND 5742 WITH THE DIRECTOR OF MIDDLE EAST AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (VERED), WHO OFFERED THE FOLLOWING ISRAELI APPRECIATION OF THE CURRENT LEBANESE SCENE. THE SYRIANS HAVE NOW OBTAINED MOST OF THEIR GOALS IN LEBANON, WITH THE OUTSTANDING (AND,SHE IMPLIED, SECONDARY) EXCEPTION THAT THE PLO HAD NOT COME TO TERMS. UNLESS THE SYRIANS ARE SUDDENLY FACED WITH AN UNTOWARD DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND -- SUCH AS A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF IRAQI VOLUNTEERS ENTERING THE FIGHTING -- THEY WILL TRY TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR GAINS.

2.IN BROAD TERMS, SYRIAN CONSOLIDATION WOULD MEAN THE INSTALLMENT OF A SARKIS-LED GOVERNMENT FOR THE  
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 06052 030627Z

WHOLE OF LEBANON, ONE WHICH WOULD BE SUSCEPTIBLE

TO SYRIAN INFLUENCE IF NOT DOMINATION.  
TO ACHIEVE THIS, VERED SAID, ASAD HAS RE-ENGAGED  
POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS, BY SHOWING HIMSELF  
WILLING TO UNDERTAKE ARAB LEAGUE TALKS AND BY  
"NEGOTIATING" WITH THE CHRISTIANS OVER POSITIONS IN  
THE NEW GOVERNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME, ASAD IS MAIN-  
TAINING MILITARY PRESSURE ON THE PLO/LEFTISTS, AND  
WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY INCREASE THAT PRESSURE --  
IN THE MOUNTAINS, FOR EXAMPLE -- IF POLITICAL AND  
DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS PROVE TO BE UNSATISFACTORY.

3. REGARDING THE PLANNED ARAB LEAGUE TALKS, VERED TOOK  
FOR A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT ALLOW  
THE AL ROLE IN LEBANON TO GROW AT SYRIAN EXPENSE.  
SHE AGREED THAT SYRIA WOULD FIND IT USEFUL AT THIS  
STAGE TO LESSEN TENSIONS WITH EGYPT, BUT -- GIVEN THE  
CURRENT STRENGTH OF THE SYRIAN POSITION -- NOT MORE  
USEFUL THAN THE EXTENT TO WHICH EGYPT WAS WILLING TO  
ACCEDE TO THE SYRIAN TERMS.

4 VERED VOLUNTEERED THAT ONE THING THAT BEARS  
CAREFUL WATCHING IS THE CURRENT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE  
MARONITES AND THE SYRIANS OVER WHO WOULD BE  
THE LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER. IF THE MARONITES ARE  
TOO INSISTENT IN HAVING SOMEONE NOT CONSIDERED SUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE BY THE SYRIANS, THIS WOULD SIGNAL  
TROUBLE FOR THE MARONITE-SYRIAN ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE.  
VERED ALSO STATED THAT WHILE IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT  
IRAQ WOULD SEND MORE VOLUNTEERS TO LEBANON, IT IS MUCH  
LESS LIKELY THAT THE EGYPTIANS WOULD SEND ANY.

5.COMMENT: WHEN EMBOFF MENTIONED SYRIA'S ECONOMIC  
BUDEN OF EX-LEBANESE REFUGEES, VERED SEEMED QUITE INTERESTED, EVEN ASKING IF WE HAVE ANY VERIFICATION OF  
THE ONE MILLION FIGURE CITED IN DAMASCUS 5621 (WHICH  
SHE FOUND HIGH). BUT DESPITE HER INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT, WE  
BELIEVE THAT VERED MAY NOT HAVE GIVEN MUCH WEIGHT TO THE  
REFUGEE FACTOR AS AN ECONOMIC CONSTRAINT ON SYRIAN  
CONSIDERATION OF ITS LEBANESE OPTIONS. VERED  
SCARCELY MENTIONED THE PLO DURING THIS DISCUSSION.  
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 06052 030627Z

IN OUR LAST CONVERSATION WITH HER, SHE HAD SAID THAT  
EVENTS IN LEBANON HAD REDUCED THE PLO TO ITS TRUE  
DIMENSIONS, AND SHE FELT THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD  
NOT GIVE THEM BETTER TERMS THAN THOSE OF JULY 29.  
TOON

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## Message Attributes

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